

**THE POLITICAL CONSPIRACY IN BRYAN SINGER'S
VALKRYIE MOVIE (2008): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH**



RESEARCH PAPER

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Valkyrie is one of drama and war movies that was set in Germany during World War II. The story is written by Christopher McQuarrie and Nathan Alexander and produced by Gilbert Adler and Chris Lee. *Valkyrie* raises issue about the conspiracy to bring down Hitler's regime in Germany and it is directed by Bryan Singer and the stars are Tom Cruise as Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, Kenneth Branagh as Major-General Henning von Tresckow, Bill Nighy as General Friedrich Olbricht, Tom Wilkinson as General Friedrich Fromm, Carice van Houten as Nina von Stauffenberg, David Bamber as Adolf Hitler. This movie is distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), released in US on December 25, 2008, Germany on January 22, 2009 and the next in United Kingdom on January 23, 2009. *Valkyrie* has running time 115 minutes. In this movie there are some languages; English and German. *Valkyrie* gets good responses from public and also commercial success; US\$90 million as production budget gets US\$200,276,784 for worldwide gross revenue. (The Internet Movie Database, 2009)

Valkyrie tells about hidden conspiracy plot to topple Nazi regime. The story is started with a Colonel Stauffenberg in Africa, writing in a journal about his thoughts in World War II, and he swears to faithful for Hitler, but he feels that he has more obligations to Germany than his allegiance to Hitler. He

argues about holding an important city in Africa is a futile effort against the British Army and American General Patton. The general agrees to have the 10th Panzer moved to a different location where they can be evacuated back to Europe. Thereafter, the camp is attacked and Stauffenberg is seriously injured, losing one of his eyes, his right hand, and two fingers from his left hand.

In Germany, Hitler visits a base camp, and there is a nervous General Trescow on looking. Hitler prepares to depart, Trescow and his partner hide a bomb in a wine case and give to a man on Hitler's plane, but it fails to explode in flight, and Trescow must return to headquarters to retrieve it. When he arrives, he meets up with someone who is revealed as a fellow conspirator, he is General Olbricht. Trescow safely retrieves the wine case and then he and Olbricht discuss a member of their secret committee who was recently arrested. Trescow recommends Olbricht contact Colonel Stauffenberg as a replacement, and then Olbricht does, and bring Stauffenberg to one of the secret meetings.

In the meeting, Stauffenberg meets three of the most important figures in the organization. A Dr. Goerdeler, who will become Chancellor of Germany should the plot succeed, a General Beck, who will lead the Armed Forces, and Witzleben. At a later meeting, Stauffenberg suggests they use Operation Valkyrie, which is a plan that uses the Reserve Army to keep the Germany country, or Hitler should be killed. Stauffenberg rewrites the order to exclude the SS from taking control, which would leave the head of the Reserve Army, General Fromm, in charge of Germany. Stauffenberg and Olbricht are surprised at Fromm's rejection, but he keeps quiet, choosing to

either support or reports them to the authorities. Meanwhile, General Trescow is sent to the front lines. Stauffenberg is promoted to head of the plan, and he with his assistant Lieutenant Haeften, take the order to the Berghof to be signed off by Hitler himself.

And then, a Colonel Quirnheim shows the dissenters how to use pencil detonators, and Stauffenberg persuades a General Fellgiebel, who controls communications at the Wolf's Lair, to help. Stauffenberg has been promoted to General Fromm's chief-of-staff, and thus has access to Hitler's military debriefings. Stauffenberg travels to the Wolf's Lair and has all preparations ready, but notices Himmler is not present at the meeting and calls the committee to ask if he may proceed anyways. He is refused by the committee, undetected by Olbricht, who mobilizes the Reserve Army anyways. As Stauffenberg safely extracts himself and the bomb from the bunker, the Reserve Army believes they were just running a training drill, and Olbricht and Stauffenberg are ordered to report to General Fromm, who is outraged they would mobilize the army without his permission. Stauffenberg is surprised; the meeting has been moved from Hitler's bunker to an open window summer hut. Stauffenberg plans to proceed anyways but then notices Himmler is once again not present. He calls the committee to ask permission to continue and they say no, but Stauffenberg and Quirnheim privately agree to continue anyways.

When the bomb explodes, Stauffenberg believes that the assassination was a success and flees the bunker. Fellgiebel calls Quirnheim about the

explosion but does not clearly convey whether the Führer is dead or not. The general then cuts off communications between Wolf's Lair and the outside. While Stauffenberg returns to Berlin, Olbricht refuses to mobilize the Reserve Army until he knows without a doubt that Hitler is dead. Behind Olbricht's back, Quirnheim issues the order for mobilization before Stauffenberg's return. With Operation Valkyrie underway, Stauffenberg and the other plotters make orders to arrest SS officers and to take control of Berlin's government quarter, which would allow them to command the rest of Nazi Germany's territories. Rumors spread that Hitler survived the assassination attempt, but Stauffenberg dismisses them as SS propaganda. Fromm finds out that communications lines to Wolf's Lair are working and from Field Marshal Keitel at the bunker that Hitler is still alive. The general resists the plotters, resulting in his arrest. Orders come out of Wolf's Lair that contradicts Stauffenberg's orders, and both are sent through out of the communication director's fears of wrongful interpretation. Despite the plotters' partial control of Berlin, their ruse is discovered by the Reserve Army, who releases the SS officers and pursues the plotters while the communications director cuts off their lines. They are detained and eventually executed.

Bryan Singer is director of *Valkyrie* movie; he was born in New York, USA on 17 September 1965. He graduated from West Windsor-Plainsboro High School in New Jersey and then from USC cinema school in 1989. Before that, Bryan Singer has Production Company; Bad Hat Harry Productions is named after a line in *Jaws* (1975), one of his favorite movies. He attended The

School of Visual Arts in New York City for a brief period of time but did not graduate from there. He visited the school in October 2000 to talk to the movie students about his experiences in the movie industry.

After completing the study, Bryan Singer concerns to direct many movies. In 2000, he surprises appearance promoting his new movie, *X-Men* (2000) in Comic Con in San Diego. He received a copy of the documentary *Forgotten Silver* (1995) (TV) as a gift from director Peter Jackson, to thank him for finishing Ian McKellen's scenes in *X-Men* (2000). There are the others movie by Bryan Singer such as *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *Star Trek: Nemesis* (2002), *Superman Returns* (2006), *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009).

Valkyrie invites responses from people during production process and playing this movie. It invites good responses and critics. The opinions of this movie based on the Tom Cruise's character as Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg. Many people like this movie because of Cruise's performance; good acting, bravery of major character in this movie and good moral character. Rebecca Bostic (2009) is a regular contributor to *The Catholic Sun* said, "the concept behind "*Valkyrie*" — the Germans who did not want their country's honor stained by Hitler's legacy — is an interesting perspective. It casts light on personal responsibility". And also she argued that knowing the historical weight of the movie makes it difficult to watch. But it is ultimately uplifting — showing that even in the midst of such great evil, there were those who understood their moral obligation. Watching historical movie can give

good learning for viewers to know and to understand the fact of historical development.

Besides the good responses, *Valkyrie* also invites some critics. Phillip Kennicott (2008) of the Washington Post noted that “the movie for failing to point out that the plot was hatched not out of moral objections to Nazism but only when Germany was facing imminent collapse”. And also Eastwood's *Gran Torino* said that many people have panned the movie strictly because of Tom Cruise. Even the Germans and their government were suspicious of this production simply because Cruise was attached to it. He's not the most expressive actor, but he's not wooden. Better yet, he has a long history of starring in watchable movies, something his peers have failed to duplicate.

Valkyrie was nominated by *the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Movies* for several Saturn Awards: Best Action/Adventure/Thriller Movie, Best Actor (Tom Cruise), Best Supporting Actor (Bill Nighy), Best Supporting Actress (Carice van Houten), Best Director (Bryan Singer), Best Music (John Ottman), and Best Costume (Joanna Johnston). Beside that *Valkyrie* also got *BMI Movie & TV Awards* and *Visual Effects Society Awards*. (The Internet Movie Database, 2009)

Valkyrie is interesting movie for many people. In this movie Bryan Singer wants to show the plot of conspiracy plan reflected as intern conflict in an organization. The desire to kill cruel leader in this movie is an effort to save the society from drubbing. There are four points that make this movie interesting. The first is *Valkyrie* has historical aspect in the story; it tells about

the event of history in Germany. This movie is based on the real story during World War II in Germany. It concerns on story of the conspiracy of secret movement. This movement has a plan to kill the cruel government. This movie not only gives knowledge about historical event in past but also it gives inspiration to everyone especially to Bryan Singer as the director to show his knowledge in a movie.

The second is *Valkryie* is suspenseful movie. The director makes the audience feel enthusiastic when enjoy this movie. This movie is supported by military references in its story, it makes the audience enjoy this, seems to run ahead of the viewers when the movie shows military style. And also about the story *Valkryie* has interesting plot story because it tells the effort of major character; Stauffenberg and his partners to fight against Hitler and his military. So they have to do this operation carefully in order to be successful. If they fail in this operation, they will die. It makes the viewers suspense during watching this movie.

The third is social care that is shown in this movie that makes it interesting. The social care is one of the factors for major character to do dangerous operation. It is interesting aspect; the solidarity can appear spirit for people. They will do everything and face the challenge although it risks their own life and family to save the lives of people from bad government.

The last is the political conspiracy which is reflected in *Valkryie* movie is one of interesting aspects to be studied. Singer shows the political conspiracy to the audience that happened in World War II especially in

Germany. Besides that, the conspiracy appears a negative opinion for many people, but in this movie it has different explanation. It is very interesting because it is done in an organization of government. The conspirators have lofty purpose and solidarity to save the living of people.

Based on the previous reasons, the researcher would like to analyze *Valkryie* movie based on sociological perspective, and the title is **THE POLITICAL CONSPIRACY IN BRYAN SINGER'S VALKRYIE MOVIE (2008): A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH.**

B. Literature Review

The researcher found the articles of *Valkryie* movie that can be literature review in his research. There are two researchers who have conducted the study of *Valkryie* movie in many articles. The first is article in Challengenewspaper (2009), entitled “*Valkyrie*; Fascist Movie about Nazis versus Nazis”. In this article, the researcher focuses on the contrary between *Valkryie* movie and the history of Nazis and also background of *Valkryie* plot as the basic topic. *Valkryie* movie is the story about anti-Nazi heroes, but in reality it is a fight among fascist. This article uses fascism as the perspective study of article. The result is plotters of *Valkryie* movie is anti-racist and was motivated to save millions being killed in war, but it is the factor that makes fascism. The principle of racist, militarist and imperialist is the impact of fascism.

The second article is conducted by Rick Groen (2009), entitled “*Valkyrie*: Smartly, Cruise takes his cues from history”. In this article he

focuses on Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg life as the case study for awareness to millions people and the nation. The struggle of plotters in *Valkryie* especially Stauffenberg shows that in awfulness Nazi regime there are still people who care to the others and against Hitler for the truth and the freedom. The result is that awareness, struggle, and freedom arouse Stauffenberg to do the big change for giving explanation that there is no racism. In his article he also discusses the story of Valkryie plot and the factors of this plot. He analyzes his article generally and not detail

The differences between the researcher and the two previous researchers are the theme and the perspective. Challenge newspaper writes about the different Fascist Movie about Nazis with Nazis by using Fascism Perspective and Rick Groen writes about the historical study from *Valkryie* movie by generally explanation, while the researcher means to analyze the movie based on Sociological Approach. The researcher analyzes the political conspiracy in *Valkryie* movie using sociological approach.

C. Problem Statement

Based on the background of the research the researcher proposes a problem statement. The problem of this research is “How is political conspiracy reflected in *Valkryie* movie directed by Bryan Singer?”

D. Limitation of the Study

The researcher focuses this research in analyzing the political conspiracy in Bryan Singer’s *Valkryie* movie based on sociological approach.

E. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are mentioned as follows:

1. To analyze Bryan Singer's *Valkyrie* movie based on the structural elements of the movie.
2. To describe the political conspiracy in Bryan Singer's *Valkyrie* movie based on sociological approach.

F. The Benefit of the Study

The benefits of the study are:

1. Theoretical Benefit

The study is hoped to give a new contribution to the larger body of knowledge, particularly the literary studies on *Valkyrie* movie.

2. Practical Benefit

The study is hoped to enrich knowledge in literary field as references to other researchers in analyzing the movie especially based on social of life with Sociological Approach.

G. Research Method

1. Type of the Study

In this study, the researcher uses qualitative research, because in analyzing the movie the researcher does not need a statistic data and calculation.

2. Object of the Study

The object of the study is *Valkryie* movie directed by Bryan Singer.

It is analyzed by using sociological approach.

3. Type of the Data and the Data Source

There are two types of the data namely primary data and secondary data that are needed to do this research.

a. Primary Data

The primary data sources of the study are *Valkryie* movie directed by Bryan Singer and the script movie written by Christopher McQuarrie.

b. Secondary Data

The secondary data source is taken from other referential data, which have relation with research, the underlying theory and other materials concern to the analysis. It can be from books and internet.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

The technique of data collection in this study is documentation. The researcher views the primary data repeatedly to reach more understanding of source. Next, the researcher takes, compares, quotes, and studies others data into some categories and develops them into a good unity.

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

The technique used in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. It concerns with the structural elements of the movie and sociological approach.

H. Research Paper Organization

The research paper organization of “The Political Conspiracy In Bryan Singer’s *Valkyrie* Movie (2008): A Sociological Approach” is as follows: Chapter I is Introduction; it consists of Background of the Study, Literature Review, Problem Statement, Limitation of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Benefits of the Study, Research Method, and Paper Organization. Chapter II is Theoretical Approach; it consists of Sociology of Literature, The Major Principles of Sociology of Literature. Chapter III is social background of American society in the late twentieth century which covers social aspect, political aspect, economic aspect, science and technology aspect, cultural aspect, and religious aspect. Chapter IV is Structural Analysis of the movie. Chapter V is Sociological Analysis of *Valkyrie* movie. It consists of the social aspect, economic aspect, political aspect, science and technology aspect, cultural aspect, and religious aspect. Chapter VI is Conclusion and Suggestion.